

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE QUESTION OF CAIN.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

CHAPTER XV. BEATRIX CHEVENIX.

PROFESSIONAL beautyism had not been invented—or rather, the calling had not been revived, for it has existed at previous epochs of our social history—at the time when Mrs. Townley Gore's young friend Miss Chevenix was in the full enjoyment of that lady's favour. Society had not entered on its latest phase of vulgarity and affectation, so that Miss Chevenix might possibly be held to have come out a little too soon. A very few seasons later, and her portrait, "this style one shilling," might have figured in shop-windows, in every variety of attitude and costume; she might have been pointed out to country cousins as coolly as the Monument; rushed after in picture-galleries or at bazaars with the coarse and resolute curiosity of which only English crowds are capable; employed by fashionable parsons as a decoy for the moneyed multitude who are not to be induced to disburse by mere motives of Christian charity; and set up as the goddess of unreason by a clique of affected nincompoops. She was quite sufficiently handsome to have incurred all these humiliations had the time been ripe for its most recent unwholesome growth; and she would not have been protected by a position so fixed and unassailable as to render impossible a kind of insolent appraisal as loathsome to high-minded women, and the men to whom their dignity is dear, as the comments and the bargains of the Babylonian Marriage-market. Miss Chevenix was not a member of a great family, parted by the impassable gulf of prestige from social im-

pertinences; she was only the daughter of a man of popular manners, no particular history or connections, and fortune presumably good, since he did things that other people of good fortune did, and no one ever heard anything to the contrary.

Mr. Chevenix and his daughter lived in a very pretty and pleasant house in Mayfair; and were models of the paternal and filial relations, as these are regarded by the world which lives for its pleasures and for appearances. They never bored each other, they were always smilingly pleased with each other; if there was anybody in the world for whom Mr. Chevenix cared even a little, that person was his daughter Beatrix; but then the "if" implied in this instance almost all an if can imply of the doubtful and debatable. There was no resemblance between the two; Mr. Chevenix was a good-looking man, with a quiet, well-bred air, and something of the manner that used to be called military, but which is no longer characteristic of the service; but it was not from him that his daughter Beatrix inherited her grand and imposing style of beauty. This had come to her from her mother, dead long ago, and whom she hardly remembered.

As she stood trimming and watering the flowers in the balcony-greenhouse of her drawing-room one fine spring morning, a few weeks after the return of Mrs. Townley Gore to London, Miss Chevenix presented a picture which few could have failed to admire.

She was above the middle height, and of the full and florid order of beauty; health, strength, activity, and vitality were expressed in her large and symmetrical form, and in the perfect colouring of her almost faultless face. Her complexion could defy

any light; it had no imperfections to conceal; the skin, with its underlying carnation tints, was as smooth as a magnolia blossom, and the deeper colour of the lips and cheeks was never too deep. A finely-modelled mouth and chin; well-shaped eyes of an indefinite colour, with a slightly furtive but very intelligent look in them; a low, smooth, white forehead; and a soft shining diadem of red hair—the true gold-flecked red, that is as beautiful as it is rare—worn in rich plaits all round her head, and curling in little rings at the back of her neck, made up the details of a portrait which will probably be as unsatisfactory as almost every written description of a fair woman is. There were many whom the beauty of Beatrix Chevenix moved to enthusiasm; there were others whom it failed to touch, who thought the luminous golden-lashed eyes as cold as they were bright, and their lack of colour a defect, and who said that the richly-tinted mouth had no feeling and no sweetness in its curves; there were even persons—hard to please in point of expression—who described her face as deceitful, and to whom her perfect aplomb, and a certain finish of look and manner which we do not readily associate with girlhood, were not attractive. These critics were, however, in a despicable minority, and they troubled not at all the pleasantly triumphant course of Miss Chevenix's life in London and elsewhere.

To that triumphant course there was but one drawback. It had lasted too long; and it is of this Miss Chevenix is thinking, as her gloved hands move deftly, and her gardening scissors are employed with skill, among the leaves and blossoms. Her beauty is in all its freshness; her vigorous health and happily unsensitive nature have preserved her from the fast fading which is the severest and generally the surest penalty of a life of excitement, amusement, and emulation. Only persons with a viciously accurate memory for the chronological facts which their neighbours would be obliged by their forgetting, remembered that Miss Chevenix was twenty-five. She had self-possession such as many women do not acquire in all their lives, but she did not look more than twenty, and that was consolatory in the face of the fact that she was still Miss Chevenix.

Those who could have told the pretty girls, half-a-dozen years younger than Miss Chevenix, but who had no chance against her grand and self-asserting charms, that she had reached so dangerous a stage of

the career of a beauty, were very few. Mr. Chevenix was a pleasant-mannered man; but if a general meeting of his acquaintances had been called to discuss all the information they had ever derived either from himself or others concerning his history and his affairs, the unanimous feeling would have been, surprise at the small amount that each could have contributed to the total. That he and his wife had not "hit it off," and had therefore wisely agreed to differ apart instead of in company, and that the only child had remained with the mother until Mrs. Chevenix's death, and had then been educated at a Paris boarding-school until she was old enough to be sent home to her father, was as much as anybody knew. The point which had been judiciously kept dark was the precise period at which Mr. Chevenix considered his daughter "old enough" to be brought home. As a matter of fact, although he had ultimately sacrificed himself with a good grace, and presented, in his paternal character, to the world an unimpeachable exterior, he had postponed the blissful period of reunion to the latest moment consistent with decency, and yielded only to an uncompromising declaration on the part of his daughter that she would not stay at school any longer. This was backed by a politely but firmly conveyed intimation on that of the head of the establishment that he must relieve her of the charge of the young lady without further delay.

Upon the explanations that ensued between the father and daughter it would be neither profitable nor pleasant to enter. Two conditions impressed themselves with peculiar clearness upon the mind of Beatrix. The first was, that she was never in any way, by protest, opposition, or even comment, to interfere with her father's selection of persons to be admitted to association with herself; the second, that she was not to neglect any favourable opportunity of making an advantageous marriage that might offer. She had not been fully enlightened as to the expediency, not to say necessity, of the latter clause in the contract, but enough had been said to make her uncomfortably convinced that there was something unstable in their position, and reasonably desirous to rectify it so far as she herself was concerned. Neither romance nor sentiment had a place in the mutual relations of these two persons; but they became, and had hitherto remained, very good friends, and nothing had occurred to justify the apprehension

which Beatrix had felt, that some danger was hidden in her father's future.

With really wonderful tact and celerity the handsome girl, who spoke French perfectly and sang as few singers who have got their musical training exclusively in Paris ever do sing, made friends for herself. If Mr. Chevenix had friends and associates on whose account he was obliged to make the stipulation which was faithfully adhered to by Beatrix, he also had some unexceptionable social relations, and by those his daughter profited. There really was very little acting, very slight pretence in the fond fatherly, and devoted daughterly, demeanour which the two assumed, but never over-did, and if they occasionally laid it aside in private, it was deposed only in favour of a thorough-going camaraderie which amused them.

Mr. Chevenix paid the fullest compliment within his compass to the superior abilities of his daughter, when he remarked to himself, after he had made such an explanation of his views and intentions as he thought proper, that if he had known she was so sharp and sensible he would have brought her home two or three years sooner. Those two or three years had, however, been irrevocably lost; and since then nearly five years had elapsed, during which Beatrix had bloomed in undimmed and continuous beauty, and had never given him any cause of complaint. Those years had not, however, seen her "settled" in the estate matrimonial, into which numbers of girls, not endowed with a hundredth part of her beauty, had passed without the least trouble to themselves or their parents.

The routine of the season, an annual succession of country-house visiting, the doing of all the things that the world does with the air of a solemn obligation, the business of pleasure carried on with a purpose as serious as if it were really worthy of beings at once rational and immortal, had all failed of the object which Miss Chevenix had as clearly in her mind as any manœuvring mother, and she was again growing apprehensive of the future.

She had not been admitted by her father to full knowledge of his affairs, but she was aware that he was deeply in debt, and she had seen recent signs and tokens which she was too intelligent to misinterpret, that he was not so indifferent to the fact as he had formerly been. Her personal comfort was not yet in any way impaired or affected, but there was no

saying how soon it might be; altogether she was oppressed by a sense of uneasiness, something like a presentiment of coming change and disaster. Mr. Chevenix had now been away from home for some days, and Beatrix observed that a formidable pile of letters of the aspect which she had learned to associate with requests for payment of moneys, had accumulated in that time.

The house, very well ordered and tasteful in all its appointments, was pleasant to see on that bright spring morning, when the life of the London season was beginning to stir briskly, and the beauty of the earth was disclosing itself even in towny Mayfair. Spring was abroad in the air, spring flowers were in the balconies, and carts laden with those bright but deceptive floral treasures on which one wastes money consciously but irresistibly, were making their tempting progress through the streets. Beatrix was too strong and healthy to be lazy; she could be among the latest at a late party, and appear punctually at breakfast the next day, and as it was her way to enjoy all that was enjoyable, she made most of the spring mornings. But on this particular morning she felt dull and out of sorts; if her father had been at home she would have cheered herself up by a walk in the park; as it was, when she should have trimmed and watered her flowers, she did not know what she was to do until the afternoon, when one of her numerous friends would take her for the invariable drive. She was not in a mood for singing; she had sung her very best last night at Lady Darnell's, and Sir Henry had availed himself of the opportunity to escape into the next room and talk into the ear of that pale-faced, insignificant little Miss Hylton, who did not know one tune from another. His mother, too, had made quite a fuss about the girl, and though she had been very polite to Beatrix, it was in such a different way, almost as she might have been to a professional singer. Did Lady Darnell, she wondered, think her too handsome, and that she sang too well? The supposition had its flattering side, but it also had its vexatious side, and it was on the latter that Beatrix felt just then inclined to dwell. Sir Henry Darnell had paid her great attention when they met at a country house in Leicestershire in the winter, and though he was decidedly ugly, and not very wise, he was gentlemanly, and kind, and rich; she could like him well enough, and it might do. Her heart was

not even ever so lightly engaged in this matter, but her vanity was touched, and it suffered.

For these reasons Miss Chevenix was out of sorts on this bright spring morning, and as she looked idly over the balcony into the street, before drawing down the awning, there was a cloud upon the radiance of her face which obscured and altered it. But with that glance her fair face brightened, a flush of eager curiosity overspread it, and she stepped back within the drawing-room hastily and went to the head of the stairs. She had seen a carriage which she knew draw up at the door; it was Mrs. Townley Gore's brougham. This was an equally unexpected and delightful sight, for Miss Chevenix believed her friend to be down in Hampshire, and had no hope of her return to London for an indefinite period. In a minute a letter was handed to her.

"DEAR BEATRIX,—It is all over. Mr. Horndean died yesterday, after a rally, which for a whole week led us to hope for his recovery. It was very sudden at the last. I have been obliged to come to town on business of an important nature. Can you come to me? It would be so nice of you. Mr. Townley Gore is laid up with gout at Horndean. I send the brougham to bring you to me. I have a great deal to do and see to, as you may suppose.—Yours ever, C. T. G."

Miss Chevenix was all animation in a moment. It was so nice of Mrs. Townley Gore to send for her. It was just what she wanted; something to take her out of herself. Of course she would go to her friend at once; it was not as if this were a case of real affliction—anything of that kind was detestable, and to be avoided as the very worst kind of boredom—it was quite another thing. Mr. Horndean had been Mrs. Townley Gore's guardian, an eccentric old bachelor, about whom no one in the world really cared. The important business was, no doubt, the ordering of mourning, and Mrs. Townley Gore's very natural wish to escape from the dreariness that succeeds a death. Miss Chevenix would go to her at once, after merely the delay involved in writing a line to say she could not go out in the afternoon with the other dear friend who was not placed in circumstances so interesting, and might be put off. She summoned her maid, wrote her note, and in a few minutes stepped into Mrs. Townley Gore's carriage with as little of the

air of a person about to pay a visit of condolence, as she expected to find her friend wearing that of one in need of consolation. Miss Chevenix had put Mrs. Townley Gore's letter into her pocket. On her way to Kaiser Crescent she took it out, and for the first time observed the letters T. O. scribbled in a corner of the single page on which it was written. She turned the leaf, and found this additional line:

"No news of my brother. He is Mr. Horndean's heir."

THE FATHER OF RAILWAYS.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I. PLANTING THE ACORN.

A HUNDRED years have only just run out since the birth, in a poor labourer's cottage, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, of a little infant, by whom the whole world has been completely transformed. There is nothing in the least picturesque in the aspect of this exceedingly humble tenement, which still stands there at the distance of about eight miles on the high-road from Newcastle to Hexham, just a few hundred yards from the east end of the little straggling colliery village of Wylam; one of the obscurest places, but for this event, in the length and breadth of all Northumberland. High Street House—the name, to-day as then, of this now notable structure—is one of the commonest of those small two-storied, four-roomed, almost squalid-looking red-tiled rubble buildings which afford accommodation to a working-man's family. The more westward of the two lower rooms was the scene of the occurrence, a century ago, which now makes the lowly edifice a place of pilgrimage. Its walls are still unplastered; its floor is still clay; the bare rafters are still plainly visible overhead. Coal-dust, slag, and ashes litter in abundance the ground outside this sordid abode, from the doorway of which the pumping-engines of the neighbouring pit are, day and night, only too distinctly audible.

There, on Saturday, the 9th of June, 1781, was born the second of the six children of Robert, commonly called "Old Bob," Stephenson, and of Mabel his wife, daughter of one Robert Carr, a dyer of Ovingham. Coming, originally, across the border from Scotland as a gentleman's servant, the head of this poor home had sunk, even before his marriage, to the position of a mere hind or day-labourer. Earning in his best times no more than twelve

shillings a week, he had upon that wretched pittance to bring up his brood of four sons and two daughters. Throughout life, down to its very close, a man of the most ordinary capacity and utterly illiterate, he and his equally commonplace wife were, nevertheless, the parents of one of those great typical men of mark who come into the world scarcely once in a whole score of generations. Remembering the marvellous changes that his second son, George Stephenson—the father of railways and perfecter of the locomotive—was destined to accomplish, and contrasting his colossal achievements with the pitiful little nestling-place from which he emerged; it is, for all of us, as if, from an earthen vessel, another and a most benignant geni had been released, akin, in power at anyrate, to the one which, upon the loosening of the seal of the great Solyman, escaped from the brass pot dragged in his net from the everlasting deep by the Arabian fisherman.

So steeped in poverty was the elder Stephenson, that he was unable to secure to his offspring any education whatever. Not until George was a great lumbering fellow of eighteen was he enabled to acquire any knowledge at all, even of his letters, or to make his earliest attempt at the writing of pothooks, doing so then entirely at his own instance, and paying for it at the rate of fourpence a week out of his own hard earnings. During the first eight years of his existence he was the fetcher and carrier of the little household; ran upon errands; nursed his younger brothers and sisters; and took "father's dinner" to him at midday, tied up in a bundle. His earliest employment, towards the end of that infantine period, won for him, at the hands of a neighbouring widow, twopence a day for herding cows; the child, even then, in his leisure hours, thoughtfully amusing himself by building up toy engines of clay, and by constructing miniature wooden water-mills on the burn at Dewley, whither the family had just before removed from Wylam. Fourpence a day was George's wage at nine, his occupation then being alternately that of leading horses at the plough and hoeing turnips. The next advance of his receipts as a breadwinner was to sixpence a day, in return for his labour as a corf-bitter or wellor, one, that is, who cleared good coal of stones and dross, or, as the phrase is in the Black Country, of bats and brasses. When an urchin of fourteen, he contrived to gain, moreover, as much as a shilling a day for

firing the engine, as an assistant to his father, who was then working as an engineter on the Dewley Burn Colliery. Though George began to grow soon afterwards to stalwart proportions, he was at that time so small of stature, that he used to hide himself from the owners whenever they passed by, dreading that they might consider him too little to be the recipient of so large a recompense.

After a brief removal from Dewley Burn to Jolly's Close, the boy-hand went as a fireman on his own account to Mid Mill Winnin, where for two years together, as the fast mate of one Bill Coe, he drudged on in his obscure position. All through that interval his modest ambition was to become an engineman, in the hope of realising which not very extravagant aspiration he toiled assiduously day after day, from early morning until long after nightfall. He was yet but a stripling of seventeen when his perseverance, to his immense delight, was rewarded, his wages being increased to twelve shillings a week on his formal appointment to the long-coveted post of engineman. His exclamation at the time was, "Now, I'm a made man for life!" Thenceforth he devoted himself with the zeal of an enthusiast to the duties of his craft. His engine was to him almost as if it were a living creature. It became his pet and his companion. He took it to pieces bit by bit, the more thoroughly to master the intricacies of its complicated mechanism. Piece by piece—after so thoroughly cleansing and polishing them one by one that the steel and brass constituents shone like so much gold and silver—he put it together again, and by his frequent manipulation of the engine thus in detail acquired such an intimate knowledge of it in all its parts, that in the fulness of time he was enabled, in spite of his lack of book-learning of any kind, to bring the high-pressure system to absolute perfection.

It is not the least among the many accumulated marvels which go to the making up of the steam-engine, that it owes its growth piecemeal far more to the illiterate and the uncultured than to men of abstruse science, or to profound natural philosophers. As illustrative of this, it will be sufficient to direct attention here for a moment to the fact, that one of the very earliest steam-engines ever contrived, that fabricated by Thomas Newcomen, the blacksmith, was first made self-acting, was first transformed into an

automaton through the sagacity of a mere lad, one Humphrey Potter, who was worried into observing the complex action of the machinery by having constantly to interrupt his game of marbles or of pegtop, to keep the engine at work, by attending at regular intervals to his purely mechanical duties as, what was then termed, a cock-boy. Supposing him, in that capacity, to have failed in his manipulation of the ingenious mechanism contrived by Newcomen, it would inevitably, by coming to a standstill, have betrayed his negligence. Driven into a keener observation than ever of the oscillating beam above him, the movements of which his hands were every now and then called upon to supplement, he saw at once that by simply connecting this and that portion of the machinery with strings, the all-important levers would from that moment be acted upon, not by his touch, but by the engine itself, which would thenceforth, so long as the fire was burning and the boiler kept heated, alternately open the steam-valve and close the injection-valve with unflinching regularity. From that instant the steam-engine was rendered self-acting—was all but gifted, as one might say, with volition.

Shirking no duty, but, on the contrary, loving the labour entrusted to his hands, as a source for himself of perpetual delight, George Stephenson, at eighteen, in the intervals of his work, put himself manfully to school—learning how to spell and read, first from a poor teacher in the village of Wallbottle, and afterwards from an abler though still humbledominie, named Andrew Robertson. Having, at nineteen, with the help of his mate, Bill Coe, mastered the art of breaking, he was enabled, when he had just turned twenty—this was in 1801—to accept the post of brakesman at the Dolly Pit, in Black Callerton. His wages there, which at the outset were seventeen shillings and sixpence, soon rose to a pound a week, an income that, within view of his hitherto straitened circumstances, almost amounted in his estimation to a luxurious competence.

Heartened into a new appreciation of the brightening world around him, the young brakesman of Black Callerton then began shyly courting the girl who soon afterwards became his wife, and whose maiden name was Fanny Henderson. It is eminently characteristic of the sturdy and sterling nature of the man that, with an eye to saving up money enough to enable him with prudence to marry his sweetheart, he

set to work at this time busily mending shoes in all his after hours of an evening. One especial pair which he had soled and heeled for his betrothed, not for money, but for love, is said to have been so entirely to his own satisfaction, that he could not resist the delight of showing it about among his acquaintance. Having, with the aid of his last and awl as a cobbler, saved up the first guinea he ever possessed, and having eventually, a few months after his coming of age, furnished in a very humble way indeed his future home on Ballast Hill, at Willington, George and his young affianced were married on the 28th of November, 1802, in Newburn Church.

At Willington, on the 16th of October, 1803, there was born to the still obscure brakesman of that Dolly Pit, his only son Robert, who was later on to be intimately associated with him in fame, and in a great measure besides to vie with him in the grandeur of his achievements.

Thrifty and industrious in a remarkable way for three years together at Willington, George eked out his small means not only by mending, but even by making shoes, as well as by cleaning all the clocks and watches in his immediate neighbourhood. The thoughtful bent of his intellect was further shown at that time by his adventuring upon a number of curious mechanical experiments. That most of these were failures mattered little; they were schooling his rare powers in the most effectual manner, through the sharpening influence of experience. His next removal, still as brakesman, to West Moor Colliery, near Killingworth, marked an epoch in his history. There, in 1806, he lost his young wife, to whom he was tenderly attached. Overwhelmed with grief, after placing his infant son in safe keeping, he set out on foot with his valise strapped on his shoulders, and trudged all the way to Montrose, in Scotland. Thence, after working hard and saving up a little purse of twenty-eight pounds, he walked all the way back to Killingworth, to find his father ruined in fortune and blinded by an accident. This was in 1807, when George, after paying off his father's debts, and from that time forward providing for his support, settled down once more in his former position, namely, as brakesman at the West Moor Colliery. For the purpose of providing means for the education of his son, he then took more energetically than ever, in his leisure hours, to the mending of clocks and watches, supplementing that extra work by the manufacture

of lasts for shoemakers. His earliest success, his first genuine hit in the way of mechanical contrivance, was his comprehensive rearrangement of the pulley-wheels and gearing of the machine at West Moor Pit-mouth, whereby a considerable saving was ensured to the owners of that colliery through the diminution of the hitherto constant wear and tear upon the ropes by friction. Nevertheless, large though the advantage was which had thus been secured by him to his employers, the reward bestowed upon him for his ingenious and perfectly effective suggestion was seven shillings!

Meanwhile, a larger test of his capacity was just then imminent. It arose thus: A new pit had been recently sunk near Killingworth, at a distance of about a mile from the one at West Moor, both belonging to the same proprietary; both, that is, being under the Grand Allies. A considerable amount having been already expended and only too literally sunk in these preliminary operations, the engine at the pit-mouth gave unmistakable evidence of being quite useless, proving incapable, in point of fact, of lifting the water, which consequently threatened to drown out the whole enterprise. Stephenson being observed one day by a sinker at the pit, named Kit Heppel, seriously contemplating the faulty engine, "Weel, George," asked the latter, "what do you mak' o' her?" "Man, I could alter and make her draw," was the prompt and quiet answer; the speaker adding confidently, "In a week's time from this, I could send you to the bottom." Having had this repeated to him, Ralph Dodds, the head-viewer, who until then had been fairly at his wits' end and all but in despair, determined upon giving this notoriously untaught master of his craft an opportunity of making good his assurance. "Well, George," said Mr. Dodds on their next meeting, "we are clean drowned out, and cannot get a step further. The engineers hereabouts are all beat, and if you really succeed in accomplishing what they cannot do," quoth the head-viewer emphatically, "depend upon it I'll make you a man for life." Stephenson at once undertook the task, but upon one condition, that he might choose his own workmen. Taking the engine to pieces, he modified its construction here and there, and upon putting it together again made it plain to the comprehension of all that his success was not only complete but triumphant. George's evidence of skill in this emergency was a matter of wonder to the whole neighbourhood. Be-

sides receiving in recompense for his ingenuity ten pounds sterling, the largest sum that any single job had yet brought into his possession, he was forthwith, while the pit was yet sinking, appointed, with higher wages than he had ever before earned, the engineman at Killingworth.

Shortly afterwards the Long Benton Quarry Works having in a similar way been interrupted by an overwhelming influx of water, Stephenson, upon learning that every attempt at pumping them out had proved ineffectual, quietly remarked that he would undertake to set up an engine there, no bigger than a kail-pot, by the help of which, in a week's time, he would clear out the inundation. Taken again at his word, the feat within a few days was accomplished. George thereupon became, as might have been expected, the talk of the whole countryside. His modest dwelling at that period was a homely cottage called the Three Houses, standing between the railway and the high road at Killingworth, and which is nowadays scanned with interest by every sightseer in that part of Northumberland. Inside, but more particularly in the general house-room, which was more of a kitchen than a parlour, the place, in those earlier years of the century, was littered by models of engines, of pumping apparatus, and of other machinery. Outside, in the adjacent garden, where Stephenson took great delight in growing giant cabbages and broodingnagian cauliflowers, his ingenuity was yet further evidenced by an eccentric contrivance to scare away the birds in seed time—to wit, a "flay craw," which, as the wind swung it round, flourished its long-sleeved arms about like a scaramouch or a pierrot in a masquerade.

Notable though the stalwart engine-man was among his fellows for his athletic feats, through his strength and agility in lifting heavyweights, wrestling, leaping, and throwing the hammer, so eager was his quest of knowledge all the while that he disdained not to stoop by the hour after nightfall over a slate, learning from one John Wigham, as though he had been the merest schoolboy, the elementary rules of arithmetic.

It was upon the death, in 1812, of the then enginewright of the High Pit, that Stephenson had been appointed, with a salary of one hundred pounds a year, to that responsible post at Killingworth. Under his management were then placed all the engines belonging to the Grand Allies, the proprietary allowing him the

use of a sturdy Irish horse called Squire, mounted on which he was enabled to visit with ease their remoter collieries at Black Fell and Brackenbeds. Then it was that he erected with complete success his first winding-machine, and that he projected and accomplished, to the astonishment of all that district, the earliest self-acting incline that had ever been heard of thereabouts. With such well-considered and admirable innovations was the working of the pit at Killingworth rearranged under his direction, that he was enabled to reduce the number of horses, there employed, from a hundred to sixteen. Horse-power, thanks to him, was already in rapid process of being superseded, for the prospective transformation of the stationary engine into a locomotive was now beginning more and more to absorb his attention.

Absolutely convinced in his own mind that the thing could be done, he resolved upon constructing an engine that should go hither and thither, and that should obey his behests as implicitly as the servant in the Gospel obeyed those of the Roman centurion. To the carrying out of this daring enterprise he devoted the whole of the ample resources of his large and ingenious intellect.

Whatever books or instruments were needed as aids in the desired direction, were opportunely, it might be almost said providentially, placed at his command, when most desirable, by the Rev. William Turner, of Newcastle. So grateful a sense had Stephenson himself of that good clergyman's well-timed assistance, that he once exclaimed, with some emotion: "To my dying-day I never can forget the obligations which I owe to my venerable friend!" His main resources, nevertheless, there cannot be an instant doubt of it, were far rather in his own strong, clear brain, in his keen and watchful eye, in the delicate and vigorous grasp of his good right hand, than in any library or in any laboratory.

Captivated though his thoughts were by the almost ever present sense that was now upon him, that the time was very near at hand indeed when he might be enabled to solve the hitherto inscrutable problem of the locomotive, his was so essentially manly a nature at heart that he never once sank into a mere day-dreamer, but had his sympathies at any and every moment instantly at the command of the youngest, the poorest, and the weakest of the homely race of which he was one and by which he was surrounded.

Thus, when Killingworth Colliery, one day in 1814, caught fire, and when the wives and sisters and children of the men then down in the pit thronged about the mouth of it in half-maddened anguish, George Stephenson was the one who instantly made them lower him down the shaft to the rescue. There, immediately upon his reaching the bottom, his heartening words were these: "Are there six men among you with courage enough to follow me? If there are, come and we'll put the fire out!" Knowing their man perfectly well, and having absolute confidence in him, they of course instantly placed themselves under his direction. Consequent upon their doing so, through the atmosphere being excluded by a suddenly improvised wall, the conflagration was extinguished, the colliers' lives were saved, and the pit, by the interposition of his prompt hand, was in the very nick of time guarded from destruction.

The Geordie Lamp contrived by Stephenson, shortly after this, he first thought of in the midst of the horror inspired by this appalling accident, one which but for him must have ended in a catastrophe. If the Government prize of two thousand pounds was, at the close of the competition, awarded to Sir Humphry, for the Davy Lamp, a supplementary one thousand pounds, raised by subscription, was, it is satisfactory to know, handed over to his homely rival at Killingworth. A competition of a very different kind, however, George Stephenson was to enter upon immediately afterwards, and from it he was destined—happily, not merely for his own sake, but for the whole world's—to come forth victorious. Just when he was entering upon it—that memorable battle of the locomotive—he had more than a mere glimmering of its wonderful after consequences. "I will do something in course of time," he said, "which will astonish all England." Asked years afterwards what he had thus foreshadowed, "I meant," he said, "to make the mail run, between London and Edinburgh, by the locomotive before I died, and," he added with a sigh of satisfaction, "I have done it!" Similarly, before the achievement was accomplished and when his words, of course, sounded like the very wildest extravagance, he had said: "Men shall take supper in London, and breakfast in Edinburgh." At that very time, the fiery dragon was being harnessed at Killingworth.

SUNDAY WITH THE SAILORS.

THERE is a strong family-likeness between all the great thoroughfares that pierce the dense quarters of East London. Commercial Road East differs not greatly from classic Whitechapel, and yet there is a difference; there is more air, more vigour, the keen east wind seems to bear a kind of briny flavour, and the men who swarm up to the roof of the tramway-car display a cat-like agility in the process, that suggests the habit of going up aloft. And in those model dwellings somebody has draped his room with gay bunting, recalling indefinitely white cliffs and breaking surge, and the coastguardman's snug cabin by the shore; perhaps there really are coastguardmen in these parts, by-the-way; there are smugglers in plenty anyhow—of the cunning kind, so unlike the Dirk Hatteraicks of old, with a worm-eaten old lighter in lieu of the smart lugger, and a dry railway-arch in the way of a smuggler's cave. Commercial Road would not be Commercial Road East if it were not well provided with cheap clothing-marts, but it has also a special feature of its own, in big drapery and all-sorts emporiums, and the sight of the young women in golden hair looking out of the first-floor windows suggests envy of the smart young men in the same employ who are privileged to spend their Sundays in such society; only as the plate-glass and elaborate arrangements in hair are not quite in keeping with the sea-going motive of this expedition, it is a relief to find the big emporiums succeeded by more humble shops, where butchers and bakers offer to supply ships' stores, where Solomon modestly deals in the optical line, and Davies offers wonderful opportunities in the way of dreadnoughts. And then with a break in the long dull line of house-tops and chimney-pots we catch sight of a clump of tall masts.

Is it not a relief to come to the edge and final boundary of this weary East London, and to see against the sky the masts of ships, the tangled tracery of ropes, the flags fluttering in the breeze; with this a whiff of tar and the faint clank of a windlass, which last chimes in apologetically with the church bells, as much as to say: "By your leave, but time and tide wait for no man; and with a full tide and flowing sail, up anchor and away." All this in Stepney, and in the broad thoroughfare which otherwise has nothing specially nautical about it, but seems to hang rather to

the landward side with its narrow slums and labyrinths of courts and alleys.

Evidently an amphibious kind of parish this of Stepney, and so far a proper foster-mother for the children born at sea, whom tradition assigns to it as parishioners, in partibus, as it were. And just here is an evidence of the special favour Stepney shows to seafaring men, in the form of a roadside chapel, upon which is writ in large characters "Chapel for Seamen;" outwardly a florid little chapel, bare and gaunt and damp-stained within—something like a mausoleum on a large scale. Chilly, too, and slightly vaultlike is the atmosphere, with only a sprinkling of people to air the building; but the aspect of things is made more cheerful by a plentiful arrival of children, sundry little families without apparent head. Are these the youngsters born at sea? or are they perhaps skippers' children? Anyhow, if Stepney be their stepmother, she has not behaved unkindly, but turned them out combed and brushed, and polished with huckaback towels, in the neatest of costumes and suits, a credit to all their belongings.

But where are the seamen? I see a skipper here and there with bronzed face and quiet steadfast eye, but not a sign of Jack from the fo'cs'l, in any corner of the building.

However, it is too late to retire, for the harmonium has begun and the minister has made his appearance on the platform; and here it is at once evident that we are in a different atmosphere to the perfervid one of the Tabernacle. Here we have a divine of the school of Wesley, indeed, but still a divine, who, under slightly different conditions, might well have been an evangelical dean. And the service proceeds in a quiet methodical way far removed from what we are accustomed to regard as Methodistical. Probably our divine is of opinion that a good sermon can't be out of place, otherwise one might have thought that a recommendation to practise fasting occasionally in a quiet unobtrusive way, and to set aside a chamber for private meditation and prayer, was not eminently adapted for a sailor's needs and wants. Even on the skippers the ideas broached seemed to fall rather flat.

In the middle of the sermon a movement on the part of a bluff skipper in a front row revealed features which seemed familiar. Yes, it was certainly Captain Checkerby. I have met the captain once or twice in foreign parts, and his figure is indelibly impressed on my memory: a stout burly form in a brown-knitted jersey, a

cap with ear-flaps tied over the crown, and blue flannels stuck into half-boots. There was no compromise about Checkerby. Sundays or fêtes abroad were all the same to him as far as costume was concerned, and he would interview the most correctly-uniformed officials in the way of harbour-masters and chief douaniers in the same unpretending guise. "Bother their uniforms," he would say; "this here is mine, the uniform of a British seaman." But he does not wear his uniform to-day; the British Sunday has been too many for him. He wears a coat of shiniest broad-cloth, whose superfine texture rather accentuates the bulky lines of its wearer; his face also shines with soap and friction. When service is over Checkerby and the writer meet in the vestibule.

"It's the missus," whispers Checkerby apologetically. "She makes me come here. Bless her heart! Being delicate in her health, it worries her if she fancies I ain't at chapel on Sundays."

No apology is needed, Checkerby; other climes, other manners, and if we have occasionally spent a Sunday abroad in a light-hearted, enjoyable manner, we know better now, and cry peccavimus—if that be the right thing to cry—with a sigh for the days that are past.

"You are seafaring men, I suppose," here interposed the mild voice of a grey-haired elder of the flock. "Will you join us this afternoon? We shall have an interesting little meeting, and afterwards there will be tea."

Checkerby looks a little bewildered at this address, as if he were rather inclined to take to flight without further parley.

"Will other seafaring men be present?" his companion asks.

"Well, as for that," rejoins the elder, "perhaps there may be; but the wind, you know, so long in the east, and against the homeward bound."

Checkerby, who has recovered his self-possession, with a glance aloft gives his adhesion to the east wind; but as for the meeting and the tea—well, he has promised his mate an afternoon ashore.

"Then send the mate," rejoins the elder good-humouredly, and Checkerby promises to mention the matter seriously to that young man.

There was something tempting in the notion of the meeting and subsequent tea, and if Checkerby would have stood by me the thing would have been done. But the possibility of having a meeting held over

one single-handed, and then, perhaps, to be cross-examined and detected as not being a seafaring man at all but an imbiber of tea under false pretences, the risk was too great. And so we turned our backs upon the hospitable chapel.

"As you've lost your tea, mister, suppose you have a snack with me; we're lying in the dock hard by."

Checkerby's craft is a small steamer, the Prosperous, trading around the French and English coasts. The captain's cabin is about as big as a good-sized dining-table, but a comfortable little nook nevertheless, with most of the requisites of life swinging within easy reach of the arm. The beef is good; the captain's cook, concentrating his mind entirely on boiling beef and pork and making pea-soup, has attained supreme excellence in that particular groove. As refreshment is going on, a panel suddenly slides back, and a young man with a shock of red hair surmounting the great heavy head of the sluggard, appears in the midst of us.

"My first officer, sir," explains the captain impressively. "John," addressing his subordinate, "I've got an invite for you—tea at the Wesleyan chapel."

John passed his fingers several times reflectively through his scarlet locks.

"Will there be any young wummen there, noo, d'ye think, captain?"

"That's it," exclaimed Checkerby. "You don't fetch John with a tea unless you've got a sweetheart for him too."

"Well, I'm thinking I shall be better off in Kentish Town," John decides with a smirk, thinking of the five pretty daughters of his compatriot, the chief engineer of a big ocean steamer, who has set up his tent in the north-western district.

"Well, now, there's Bob, the engine-room lad. Bob's got a Sunday coat, harn't he?" queries the captain.

"Aye, and a verra good one too," replies the mate.

"Then Bob shall go and have his tea," adjudges the captain, but reckons in this instance without his Robert, who pleads a prior engagement with another lad on board the Apollo, a big screw just come in from Bombay by way of the Canal. And as there was nobody else on board just then except the cook, who couldn't be spared, and a fireman, sleeping off a bad attack of drink, the idea of sending a representative of the Prosperous to the tea-party was finally abandoned.

"The fact is," said Checkerby judicially, "there's so many societies, with nice comfortable secretaries, too, to look after seamen, that the job is to find a seaman to look after."

I think Checkerby rather resents all the solicitude shown for seamen, and he does not conceal his opinion, or rather his want of opinion, of the whole race of sailor-men. But then Checkerby has a good share of the Prosperous for his own, and has the prejudices of a shipowner as well as of a skipper.

It would be difficult to find more perfect stillness and solitude than about the London Docks on a Sunday. Our friend the divine might come here and meditate with nothing to disturb him; but to those not given to contemplation the effect is rather depressing. Checkerby, for instance, shows signs of ennui, and gladly hails a proposal to take a cruise as far as Poplar.

Limehouse is soon reached and passed, but on the way the question arises, what has become of the hamlet of Ratcliffe, that was once hereabouts; shown in old maps wedged in between Shadwell and Limehouse, and whose name was perpetuated to within living memory in the title of Ratcliffe Highway. Has it shared the fate of those lost countries recorded in the folk lore of nearly all primitive races overwhelmed by the waves, and now perhaps lying beneath the mud and ooze of the Thames? But nobody knows anything about Ratcliffe; and even the once notorious Highway is almost forgotten.

Now Poplar is a nice open breezy place, fringed with the masts of big ships, the houses, indeed, almost shouldered out by ships and docks, but what there is of it that is terra firma rather respectable and precise than otherwise, and disposed to look down upon sailor-men. And, indeed, sailors don't resort here much. You may meet a midshipmite of the Redstar Line, or a P. and O. man, his face well browned by the Red Sea scorch, but Jack from the fo'cs'l feels more at home in the lower latitudes of Shadwell and Wapping. But the sight of a downright old salt sitting forlornly on a seaman's chest, with a big oilskin bag beside him, high and dry and stranded outside a public-house, whose doors are remorselessly shut against him, might suggest to some of our genre painters a fruitful subject, say, "Left by the Tide," or "On the Ebb;" while a procession of

smart young lads in regular man-o'-war rig, their kits slung over their shoulders, coming along with full-grown sailor swing, form an effective contrast. Altogether Poplar grows upon one, and Checkerby agrees that, for anybody fond of ships and sea-faring ways, here would be a grand place to live. Better than all the composite glories of South Kensington would be a good roomy house in Poplar, with a gaze-about on the roof looking over the river. There must be fine sunsets now and then over the river, a dim glory shining through the haze of London and lighting up the shipping in the Pool with lurid radiance, while some leviathan, vomiting smoke and stream—glorified too in the wonderful light—wends its way through the placid tide; or in twilight, with a young moon in the sky, it must be pleasant to catch sight of the white sails, touched with silver, showing over the mist-wreathed marshes of the Isle of Dogs; and perhaps, as night drew on, you might fancy you heard the deep baying of the fierce hounds that gave the Isle its name—at least, if we may believe the learned Strype, who writes thereof: "So called because, when our former princes made Greenwich their country seat, and used it for hunting (they say), the kennels for their dogs were kept on this marsh; which usually making a great noise, the seamen and others, thereupon, called the place the Isle of Dogs; though it is not an isle, indeed scarce a peninsula, the neck being about a mile in length;" a derivation too quaint and suggestively picturesque to be discarded, even were the cunning ones of etymology against it to a man.

By this time the bells of Poplar are calling the faithful to prayer, to a church too that, though not beautiful in itself, somehow harmonises with its surroundings; the union-jack floating over its walls, and its queer spire giving itself the airs of a sea-mark, that pilots keep their eyes upon, and sailors hail as one of the familiar sights and signs of home. But among the dense crowds that throng the streets on their way to church or chapel there is no sign of Jack. Little mission rooms open now, and at street corners knots of people gather about a nucleus of singers and speakers some of whom wear the uniform of the Salvation Army. Children gather about the open doors of these little conventicles and are chased away by the door-keepers. It is a kind of Holy Fair, only the spectators are strangely cold and

indifferent. They won't rush in and fill the rooms, they won't get excited with all the singing and shouting. Presently we come to a regular seamen's quarter. It is Shadwell, with its narrow sinister-looking streets, rows of houses of the same dull aspect, the doors just ajar; here and there a comparatively reputable lodging-house with seamen sitting on the steps smoking long pipes. Girls flaunt about in brilliant self-coloured frocks, their arms lovingly entwined, while old crones watch them keenly from door or window. Little sly-looking grog-shops blink at street corners; and outside these lounge strings of loafers, bullies and roughs with empty pockets who are waiting for Jack as for their lawful prey. Everything is quiet enough, and yet at a laugh louder than usual, or at a voice unduly raised, an ugly-looking crowd assembles in a moment, and as quickly disperses. The neighbourhood is a bad one, certainly, and yet Checkerby feels no uneasiness. There is a kind of sacredness, in these shipping regions, attaching to the character of a master-mariner. In the worst part of the quarter is a little mission-room, with an harmonium playing fitfully, and sometimes a hymn started, and then dying away.

"We haven't got our friends together yet," explains the doorkeeper, who wears a woollen jersey, and might be a waterman; "and as for seamen—well, there were lots of them a few Sundays ago, only they've all sailed away, and with the wind always hanging in the east," with a glance skywards. "Only here's one coming now," cried the doorkeeper more cheerfully, as a white-headed man in a pea-jacket came rather staggeringly down the street. "What, don't you jine us to-night, old friend?"

The old friend replies with a muttered objurgation, and lurches away into space.

"Ah, he's a bit on to-night, poor old chap," said the other compassionately. "Somebody's been treating him, no doubt, and he ain't quite hisself."

The children here, too, are as rampant as ever, putting their heads in and peeping as if the little chapel were a show, and darting away with shrill laughter when the old waterman gives chase. But, indeed, here in Shadwell the children seem to be paramount, overpowering crimps and bullies and lording it over Moll and Sue—and well-grown, healthy children too, mostly, quite different from the pale little mortals about Whitechapel and Shoreditch. Shad-

well may be wicked, but there is a certain robustness and energy in its ways commanding a qualified admiration. And perhaps it is not so very wicked after all. Anyhow, there must be many righteous within its limits, to judge from the places of worship to be found in the more respectable streets, all well filled, and with seafaring men an element, though not a strong one, in their congregations.

In some way or other, following sinuous streets, we lose Shadwell altogether, and come out into the Commercial Road, and upon a teetotal meeting occupying a narrow side-street. Across the roadway a purple-and-gold banner is displayed, with the emblems of some brotherhood, and in front is a movable platform, over the railing of which a sturdy-looking young man is holding forth—not a professional orator at all, but new to the business, and at this moment rather discomposed by the sudden hilarity of the crowd, delighted at some point made at his expense. But he pulls himself together. "That's just it," he cries. "Get a lot of you together, and you drive a man silly with your nonsense; but if I'd got one of you by yourselves, you'd talk sensible, and very likely in the end would say, 'Well, Harry, I don't know but what you're right.' Like as happened to me at Acton, when I was delivering a load, and two chaps was having words together, and certainly one of them was a poor thin-looking feller. So the other one says, 'What, you "narrow-chested individual!"—to repress idioms more vigorous but hardly polite—"and I thought the other chap would have struck him. Now, I don't like fighting, it don't agree with me; what I like to fight best is a good dinner. But this other chap says to the one he called narrow-chested, 'Why don't you take your beer like this young feller,' pointing to me; 'make you stout and stiff like him.' See, he didn't know as I was a 'bstaîner; shows it don't do me no 'arm.'"

Here Harry paused to take breath and looked round for a little applause, but failed to get any. Perhaps the meeting did not see the exact point of the anecdote, but our orator knew what he was about; he had got a start, and recovered breath and courage to deliver his parable.

"Now, see here, this is the point of it with me being a 'bstaîner; ham I the better for it, or ham I not? Now, look here, do you call that a good coat?" Harry ex-

tended his arm, pinched up the nap of his sleeve, and passed the texture through his fingers. "Well," taking silence to mean acquiescence in the virtues of his coat, "I've got another one as good at home. Now, mind me, I ain't one to brag of what I've got at home, same as an old feller I was talking to last Sunday; he begun to laugh at me, but I talked to him till I regular shut him up, and then he says 'Oh, I've got a dinner at home waiting for me,' says he, and run off. Now I'd got a dinner too, as was waiting for me, but I ain't one to brag, as I said, of what I've got at home. Tho' I've got a home, and, perhaps, a better one than his. Anyhow, when I've got a shilling in my pocket, I know how to lay it out. Not with a publican; no, publicans don't get hold of my shillings. I looks round, we've got four rooms, me and my missus, we've got no family, and we've only got four rooms; but I looks round, and when there's a corner wants something putting in it, why, when I put my hand in my pocket I find a shilling or two to buy it, and if I don't want another chest of drawers, why, I can buy something to put into the drawers, don't you see," with a self-satisfied chuckle that seemed to call forth a bitter expression on the faces of those who had no chests of drawers—probably a majority of his audience. "And what's more, I go to my work respectable," continues Harry. "A chap says to me, 'What do you want with good clothes when you're at work, for a working man?' says he. But I say," raising his voice, and with something of an inspired air, as if he felt that he was giving expression to an idea which should live in the future—"but I say as the working man 'dought to have the best of everything."

"Oh, come away," said Checkerby, plucking at my sleeve, "I haven't any more patience with the fellow. I should like to have him aboard my ship, and show him 'the best of everything.'" It was no use telling Checkerby that the man was perfectly right; that the working man of the future, relieved from the burdens self-imposed and otherwise that drink entails upon him, and sufficiently wide-awake to guard against bearing them in any other form, is likely to get very much the best of everything in the world that is coming; for Checkerby believes in a kind of divine right of skippers, and privately thinks that the world ashore should be governed on sea-going principles.

"SHULE AGRA."

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER V.

It was the end of May. We were in Rome.

At one time of my life the very word "Rome" had sent a thrill to my heart; the longing to visit it—a longing at that time impossible to be realised—had become an almost morbid craving. I had to acknowledge the truth of the mournful saying, "Everything comes too late."

It was not that I was disillusionised; my previously-gained knowledge of Rome preserved me from disappointment; but I was too absorbed by the engrossing emotions of my own life to have that intense sympathy with the life of past ages, which, in some minds, endows the old city with such a strange spell of fascination.

I only saw Rome through Lucy's eyes. My mind was so merged into hers; it was her feeling for a place which I felt, more than my own. I had so accustomed myself to the habit of trying to analyse her emotions, that I seemed to be living a double life.

It was no difficult task, with the clue which I possessed to her hidden thoughts, to trace them to their source. Then, too, she was not a good actress. She did her best, poor child, to try and be at ease with me; she feigned an enthusiasm for the scenery through which we passed; she made brave efforts to interest herself in antiquities; but the sick weary look never left her eyes, and all her movements were languid and heavy.

There may be among the readers of these pages one who will recognise his own misery in mine. He, and he only, can understand the sufferings I endured.

To love with a love that absorbs every thought, and hope, and ambition—life itself—and yet to kindle no answering passion; to pass days and weeks in the close relationship of marriage, and to know that the only happy moments she has are when the room is relieved of your presence; to know that the vows of affection she spoke at the altar were perjuries uttered to gain her the goods of this world; to know that, while you claim her as wife, her soul keeps shrinkingly aloof!

My wealth had brought a curse with it.

I was possessed by the haunting dread that at any moment Fraser might come upon us. The fact that Lucy was my wife, and that she and her old love could now only meet as strangers, could not lift this load of apprehension from my thoughts. I

had the instinctive feeling that at the first look of his eyes, the first sound of his voice, the old passionate affection for him would flame up anew in her breast. I felt that the moment of their meeting would be the death-blow to my dying hope of inspiring her with any tender emotion towards myself.

One evening we drove through the Porta San Sebastiano, and along the Via Appia. At the tomb of Cecilia Metella we alighted, bidding the driver wait till we returned. Presently we wandered down to the ruins of the Circus of Romulus. Lucy looked pale and dispirited. She seated herself on a fallen pillar, and while she rested, I told her a little of the history of the place. She listened with her large dark eyes gazing half absently at the far-off Sabine hills.

At last she said suddenly :

"You will think I am very capricious, I am afraid. You know I told you how I longed once to see Rome, and now I am here, I hate it. I feel oppressed by all these antiquities. I cannot breathe. There is no freshness in the air ; it seems laden with the sorrows of hundreds of years. I have thought of all the horrors that have happened here till I am terrified. It is like a weight upon me, the thought that every stone, every street, every church, has some ghastly tragedy clinging to it. I feel as if I should not dare to be happy in this dreadful place. I feel as if the stories of those far-off people who suffered so in the past were crushing me down."

She spoke with an emotion very unusual to her ; her lips quivered and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"We will leave here to-morrow, my darling, if you wish," I said.

"But would it make you sorry if we were to leave now ?" she said. "Do you wish to stay yourself ?"

"No ; I have no wish to stay. I think I have had enough of antiquities too. But where should you like to go ?"

"Oh, anywhere ! I do not mind so long as it is to a new strange place—a place with no history. Of course it is a shocking thing to say, but, do you know, the most vulgar suburban villas, stucco, anything, would be a relief to me after this !"

"Well, we will try and find a happy medium between the antiquities and stucco. But why did you not tell me this before ?"

"Oh, I did not like to," she said hurriedly, and once more stiffening into her old reserved manner.

Until this moment we had been the only human beings who disturbed the solitude

of the place, but now some other people were descending into the arena through one of the ruined towers. We heard the merry chatter of voices, and not being possessed by curiosity to see their owners closely, I told Lucy to stay where she was and rest a little longer, while I went in search of the carriage.

As I passed through the archway, a man was entering it. We met face to face.

It was Geoffrey Fraser !

He must have seen the start I could not control. He must have seen the look of recognition that flashed into my eyes. He too started, and looked at me enquiringly, as if about to speak—then passed on to where the group of girls had gathered.

I did not stop to think. I hurried back to Lucy, reached her breathless, told her I had found the carriage, she must come at once. I drew her arm through mine. The others were approaching. I hurried her along till we reached the road. She looked at me enquiringly.

"I thought you said you had found the carriage ?" she said.

I muttered something about the stupid fool of a driver having misunderstood me and gone farther on.

We soon found him. He was talking to the driver of another carriage. I went up to this man, and asked him if he had driven the party who were looking at the ruins ? He said yes. I asked him whether they were going on farther, or back to Rome ? He answered, back to Rome almost directly ; some of the ladies were afraid of being out after sunset.

It flashed through my mind that we might meet them on the road, and that the dreaded recognition might take place this evening.

I went back to our carriage and told the man to drive on towards Albano. Lucy looked surprised at my manner, and at the suddenness of this new arrangement. I had been so careful of her before, so anxious to avoid running any risk by remaining out after sunset. I said in explanation, that as we were to leave Rome so soon, it seemed a pity not to see one sunset on the Campagna.

We drove on ; we watched the awful splendour of the flaming western sky ; we waited till the fiery glow paled and the mist began to rise. Then, as we turned homewards, Lucy said :

"I can understand now why people love Rome. I feel to-night that I love it too. I shall never forget that sunset. Do not

let us go away to-morrow. I should so like to stay a little longer. Do you mind?"

What could I say? I had been congratulating myself all the time that she had so opportunely expressed a wish to leave, and had thus spared me the disagreeableness of inventing an excuse for a hasty departure. I could not on the spot refuse her request. I could only tell her that she should do exactly as she liked, and trust to chance to help me to escape from the danger I dreaded.

The difficulty of decision was taken out of my hands in an unexpected manner.

Lucy, who had not seemed well for some days before that evening's drive, was so ill the next morning that movement of any kind was out of the question. I bitterly reproached myself now for the disregard of her health into which my jealous fears had hurried me. The doctor whom I called in said she was suffering from a slight attack of Roman fever, aggravated probably by exposure to the dangerous atmosphere of the Campagna.

I never left her for a moment. It is needless to tell how I suffered in watching her sufferings, with the knowledge preying on my mind that my morbid jealousy had caused them. I was punished sufficiently when one night she was delirious, and addressing me as Geoffrey, implored me not to leave her. It was always the same prayer:

"Don't leave me, don't leave me, don't let me marry him, Geoffrey. I cannot; he frightens me." Then after a little: "Don't reproach me, don't look so sternly at me, Geoffrey. I did not mean to marry him, but they told me you were married, and then my voice left me, and I was so poor, what was I to do? Don't blame me, don't look like that. I cannot bear it. I shall never love anyone but you. I shall never love him. I never told him anything, but sometimes I think he knows. He cannot, can he? Don't go near him. Don't let him know we have ever met before. He frightens me sometimes when he sits and watches me. He can't guess I am thinking of you, can he?"

I learnt only too plainly from these ravings that the impression which of all others I had most dreaded making on her mind was firmly fixed there.

But in the early days of her convalescence a great change came over her. Perhaps she was touched by the devoted care with which I watched and tended her. In her languor and weakness she was

glad to lean upon my strength. I fancied I could read a quiet content in her eyes when I came in and sat by her side.

One night she took my hand in hers and gently kissed it. I sat silent, thrilled with joy, not daring to return the caress lest the passionate emotion I could scarcely control should frighten her back into coldness. Great Heaven! how near I was to happiness then, and yet I lost it!

She grew better. One day, when she had gained sufficient strength to be able to walk about the room, I went out for a little. She had begged me to go just for a little change.

Some trivial circumstance—one of those so-called trifles which have in one moment altered the whole course of many a life—took me back to the hotel about a quarter of an hour after I had left it. I went quickly up the stairs to her room. I opened the door.

She was sitting at the table, her desk open before her. She was holding an old pocket-book in her hand, out of which had dropped a dry and faded flower. She was crying; her tears were falling over the open pages; a little packet of letters tied with blue ribbon lay beside her.

She started violently as I entered, and with a quick guilty movement swept pocket-book and letters into the open partition of the desk. Then feeling, I suppose, that it was impossible her agitation could have escaped my notice, she stammered out an explanation that she had been reading some old letters—her father's; and thinking of the old times had made her very sad.

I made no reply. I did not believe her. I did not doubt for a moment that those were Fraser's letters.

As I stood there and watched her wavering eyes and changing colour, it seemed to me that in a moment the beautiful dream, that she was beginning to love me, faded away.

I tried to utter a few ordinary words in an indifferent manner, but I could not control my voice. I laid some flowers I had brought in for her on the table, took up my hat again, and went out.

I wandered about the streets, seeing nothing for some time. The demon of jealousy had seized upon me again. The very fact of her telling me a lie roused in me a sense of indignant anger.

When I felt sufficiently calm, I returned to the hotel. I made every effort to be

natural in my manner to her, but the sweet sympathy that had seemed to be growing up between us, the first tender promise of a mutual understanding, was destroyed. I could not be as I had been three hours ago. No doubt she felt at once the change, and knew its significance. We both grew restrained. I, cold and reserved; she, embarrassed and sad.

We returned to England at the end of August, and after a day or two in London went down to Mayfield.

Lucy was still far from strong; the languor of her illness still clung to her, and the bracing air of the Sussex hills, which I had hoped would be so beneficial, seemed at first too much for her.

But one great change had taken place in her. Her passion for music had revived. I had ordered a new piano while we were in London. One evening, when we came in from a drive, we found it had arrived. I asked her if she would try it. She had not once shown the least wish to touch the keys or to utter a note since her failure as a public singer.

I knew by experience how impossible it is for the love of music to be extinguished in any mind where it has once existed. It may lie dormant for years, numbed or stifled by opposing circumstances, but at any moment it will spring into life again. I watched her with mingled feelings of curiosity and hope as she sat down and her fingers again rested on the keys.

She softly struck a few chords, and then, after a moment's pause, broke into an improvisation so daring and exultant, that I was completely carried away by delight and surprise. She played for a long time, unconscious of anything round her—lost in a rapture of musical ecstasy. But presently these vague, changing, restless modulations grew into definite form, and as I listened my heart began to beat more quickly. I knew the rich satisfying fullness of that key; I knew what those throbbing chords opening out each moment into fuller harmony were leading to. She began to sing in a low tremulous voice, which gradually gathered strength and passion, that glorious song that had so enthralled me when I had first heard her voice.

When the last note had died away there was silence in the room for a moment. Then I heard her sobbing to herself. I put my arm round her and kissed her softly. I knew that these were tears of thankfulness, that the gift so long lost had been restored to her; for the long rest had given

back to her voice much of its former rich and pathetic quality, while her new experiences of life revealed themselves in the passionate fervour which thrilled in every note and spoke in every word. After that night she devoted herself to music with a zeal and earnestness in strong contrast with her former indifference.

It happened that one afternoon, when we were in the drawing-room and she was singing, that we had the unusual interruption of visitors, near neighbours of ours—a Colonel Armstrong and his wife.

There was none of the usual stiffness of a first formal call on this occasion, no time lost in discovering mutual tastes or interests in common; the sound of Lucy's voice had knocked down in a moment all barriers of reserve. Mrs. Armstrong was a musical fanatic, and she and my wife were soon engrossed in a discussion on the music of the past, present, and future; Colonel Armstrong and I, meanwhile, finding a congenial topic in politics.

An invitation to dine at Headly Hall followed as a matter of course, Mrs. Armstrong begging Lucy to bring a great deal of music. She had two or three very musical people staying in the house, and one man who had the most perfect tenor voice, and who was an immense acquisition.

As we drove along on the evening for which we had been invited, I thought I had never seen my wife look more lovely. She wore a dress of some soft pale blue material. Blue is supposed to be a hue sacred to blondes, but it certainly heightened Lucy's brunette beauty remarkably.

There were about eight or ten people in the drawing-room when we entered. After we had had a few minutes' chat, Mrs. Armstrong said: "And now I want to introduce Mrs. Blaythwaite to a friend of mine, who is one of the finest amateur pianists in Europe. She is sitting over there, just by the window. Shall we go over to her?"

They moved off, I remaining talking to Colonel Armstrong near the door, which I faced. Presently, the start which I could not control made him turn round abruptly.

"Ah!" he said, "here is our tenor. Have you met before? No? Then let me introduce Mr. Fraser—Mr. Blaythwaite."

I suppose I returned his bow, but I hardly recollect what happened for the next few minutes. I saw him make his way to where Mrs. Armstrong and Lucy were seated. I saw him pause when he had half crossed the room, start, and flush crimson over cheek and brow. He hesitated,

turned aside, and sat down at a table near him, then took up an album, turning over the leaves hurriedly and with marked agitation, while with the other hand he nervously twisted his moustache.

"He was in India with us," Colonel Armstrong was saying. "He married a widow fifteen or twenty years older than himself, and she very obligingly died a few months ago and left him every penny of her large fortune. He is immensely sought after, sings remarkably well, capital shot too. Ah, here is a man I want you to know, sitting near my wife. Will you let me introduce you?" and so it happened that I was standing close to Lucy when the meeting I had so long dreaded took place. Mrs. Armstrong looking up, caught sight of Fraser, who was still seated at the little table with the album before him.

"Ah! there is Mr. Fraser," she said. "I must make two such singers known to each other. Mr. Fraser, I want you."

He came across with an unmistakable look of doubt and apprehension on his face. Lucy looked up. Their eyes met. His bent down on her with a pleading, deprecating, anxious look; hers raised to his with the shock of a sudden surprise, terror, joy, misery strangely blended.

As I watched that mutual gaze I was more conscious of an agony of suspense than of any other feeling—a fear that she would lose her self-control and betray herself. But some of that superhuman courage which comes to most women in great emergencies carried her through the ordeal.

"You have never met Mrs. Blaythwaite before?" Mrs. Armstrong enquired, looking rather curiously at Fraser's agitated face.

"No," he replied in a very low voice, "I have never met Mrs. Blaythwaite before."

"Then I shall leave you to talk to her in my place. I have told Mr. Fraser how exquisitely you sing, Mrs. Blaythwaite. He is quite looking forward to hearing you."

She got up and crossed the room to welcome some new comer. Half automatically Fraser dropped into the vacant seat. They both sat silent for some moments. I could see that Lucy's hands were trembling. Presently Fraser said with an effort:

"You are staying—in the neighbourhood?"

She replied, "Yes—I—we, I mean, live quite close—near here."

I was recalled to a sense of where I was by the sudden cessation of the monotonous

growl in which the elderly gentleman, to whom Colonel Armstrong had introduced me, had been proclaiming his political opinions. He had stopped abruptly, and was eyeing me severely through his spectacles. I had caught a few disconnected sentences, and had a vague idea that some remark was expected of me. I stammered an apology. Fortunately, dinner was announced, and I was relieved from my dilemma.

Colonel Armstrong offered his arm to Lucy.

My seat was at the other end of the table, but on the opposite side, so that I could watch her. Fraser occupied the seat on her right hand. She must have made a desperate effort to control her emotion. She talked incessantly to her host, not once turning her head in Fraser's direction. The colour had come back to her face, and burnt in two crimson patches on her cheeks; her eyes were feverishly bright. Fraser was absent and silent, scarcely speaking a word to a charmingly pretty girl who had been assigned to him.

I suppose the instinctive antipathy with which I regarded him was reciprocated. When the ladies left the room, the talk turned upon some Indian topic—I forget what—on which my experience enabled me to give a decided opinion. Fraser contradicted me in a manner, to say the least of it, curt and dogmatic. I quietly proved him in the wrong; he accepted his defeat ungraciously enough. Colonel Armstrong looked surprised at his tone, and gave an abrupt change to the conversation.

We went back to the drawing-room presently. My eyes sought out Lucy. She was sitting in the recess of the window half hidden by a curtain. Fraser did not attempt to approach her. He went to the piano, and remained there while the much-extolled pianist thundered forth Rubinstein and Liszt. Whether the lady was equal to her reputation or no, I cannot pretend to judge. I have the vaguest recollection of the whole performance. I had placed myself where I could observe both Lucy and Fraser. My whole being was strung up to a tension of watchfulness so acute, that not the slightest look or movement could have escaped me. I saw him now and then steal a glance to where she sat nervously opening and closing her fan. She carefully avoided meeting his eyes, and seemed to be absorbed by the music.

The second piece came to an end with a

vigorous volley of octaves, and the fair player was presumably rewarded for years of persevering study by the hypocritical and indiscriminating compliments with which her audience greeted, not the performance itself, but its termination.

With singers it is a very different matter, and when Mrs. Armstrong went up to Fraser with a request for a song, it was easy to see that a genuine pleasure was anticipated.

He complied with the indolent grace which characterised all his movements, lounged up to the piano, and enquired in that languidly musical voice—which was one of his charms—what she would like him to sing. Miss Vivian, the pretty girl whom he had taken in to dinner, and who, it was not difficult to see, was deeply interested, left her seat and, coming to the piano, reminded him, with a charming blush and smile, that he had told her that she should choose one song for him. He smiled in return, and made some civil little speech, which deepened the colour on her cheeks.

I glanced across at Lucy; she had evidently seen this byplay; she could not control her eyes—anxiety, annoyance, jealousy, looked out of them for a moment. She moved restlessly, opened her fan, closed it, still watching the two at the piano. Miss Vivian, like all young ladies, loved sentiment. She had chosen Sullivan's "Once Again," and played the accompaniment for him. He stood so that he was directly facing Lucy.

As he uttered the first notes she turned very pale, and I could see her whole frame vibrate with a tremulous movement. When that passed away she drew a deep breath, and sat with downcast eyes. Every word of the song must have pierced her heart, so strangely appropriate was it to this strange meeting. He sang with an intensity of emotion which carried a ring of earnestness with it, and made the exquisite voice which Nature had given him irresistibly pleading and pathetic.

I had always hitherto felt something of contempt for performing society men, but try as I would, I could not excite this feeling for Fraser. His singing was so manly, in spite of its tenderness; his bearing so earnest and dignified; his face, with its classical beauty of feature, so lit up with passionate feeling. What woman he loved could help returning that love with a thousand-fold added force? What woman he had forsaken could resist him if he pleaded for forgiveness in those tender tones? And

if I, a man, and the man of all others who had most reason to dislike and distrust him, yielded to the spell of his fascination, what must she be feeling now? Ah! it was no morbid fancy that had made me dread their meeting, but a prophetic warning of sorrow to come. When he had finished, he walked as if drawn by some uncontrollable impulse straight up to Lucy, and asked her abruptly what she had thought of that song. She looked up at him, and seemed unable for a moment to command her voice. "Do not sing it again," she said at last, "I could not bear to hear it."

He bent down and said something in so low a tone that I could not hear the words, but she started as if she had been stung, and turned crimson. I felt that I had watched enough, and that it was time to act. I went up to her, stood beside her, took her fan from her hand and fanned her. Fraser, who had been about to seat himself next to her, gnawed his moustache, hesitated, and at last moved off.

After a little, Mrs. Armstrong came up to ask Lucy to sing. She hesitated, and I, watching her face, and seeing how unfit she looked for the exertion, began to make excuses for her. She herself was replying in the same strain, when suddenly her eyes rested on Fraser and Miss Vivian, who were sitting near the piano, to all appearance having a very pleasant little flirtation. She changed her tone, said she did not like to appear affected, she would rather even create a bad impression.

"You could not do that," said Mrs. Armstrong. "Now, what will you sing? Here is your music, choose just what you feel most in the humour for; or stay, as you say you are not in good voice to-night, perhaps a duet would not tire you so much. Mr. Fraser has a book of duets here. Will you try one with him? I will call him."

"Oh no, no," exclaimed Lucy, hastily laying her hand on Mrs. Armstrong's; "pray do not, I would much rather sing a solo."

Then seeing her hostess look surprised, she added, with an attempt at ease, "It would be too cruel to interfere with that flirtation. They are looking so very happy in that corner. Will you play for me?"

"With pleasure. What have you chosen? Ah, my favourite 'Ah, rendimi quel core.' Let us begin now."

If the womanly wish to separate Fraser and Miss Vivian had prompted Lucy to attempt to sing it was gratified. At the

first sound of her voice he was evidently affected. He bent forward, leaning his elbow on a table near to him, and, resting his head on his hand, watched her intently all the time.

Perhaps it was the consciousness of this gaze that unnerved her, for her voice at first was husky and tremulous. But she soon recovered, and sang the glorious song with a power and intensity of expression that carried all in the room—musical and unmusical—along in a glow of delight.

For the rest of the evening Fraser was moody and abstracted. He neglected Miss Vivian, who was too young to be able to conceal her feelings, and who looked quite piteous at this desertion. He was standing in the hall when we left. As we passed he held out his hand to Lucy. She hesitated for a moment before she placed hers in it.

"I must thank you for your singing, Mrs. Blaythwaite," he said in a formal tone. "I had not heard that song for more than three years. At one time it was a great favourite of mine. Good-night."

I had to put the strongest restraint upon myself to resist the impulse to snatch her hand from his. I hurried her down to the carriage. It was long before either of us spoke as we drove homewards.

My mind was in a whirl of tortured thought. I had not exaggerated to myself the danger of this meeting. He had regained in a moment his influence over her. The recollection of the past injury had been swept from her mind by the mere delight of his presence.

Perhaps even now she was dwelling with secret joy on the possibility of future meetings. But these I was determined to prevent at any cost. No social courtesies should interfere with this resolve. I would cut the Armstrongs—kind and neighbourly as they had been—were it necessary to do so. I should treat with indifference the construction placed on my conduct by outsiders. My duty and my wishes both pointed out to me the necessity of keeping these two, who had been lovers in the past, apart in the future.

When Lucy presently made some remarks about the evening, I answered sternly and brusquely. I said it was one of the most boring dinners I had ever been to; there was hardly anyone fit to talk to in the room; the Armstrongs did not improve upon acquaintance; Colonel Armstrong was egotistical, and his wife a very indiffe-

rent hostess. They were not people I should care to cultivate.

Lucy was silent for some minutes, no doubt from surprise at my unusual irritability. At last she said:

"I think you misjudge them, Philip. They seem to me very nice kind people."

"Possibly, I may misjudge them; but even allowing that to be the case, I do not care to be on friendly terms with them. I have declined Colonel Armstrong's invitation to shoot, and I think it will be better for the future to keep on merely calling terms—nothing more."

Lucy did not reply, and I could not tell whether her silence meant acquiescence with my wishes or resentment at their expression.

That night I was guilty of a meanness which I am conscious nothing can excuse, though the frame of mind I was in may explain it. The intense longing to find out for myself what terms of intimacy had existed between her and Fraser had become irresistible, and I determined to gratify it, let what would happen. I told her I had some writing to do which would keep me up for an hour; she was looking tired, she had better go to bed. She obeyed; and when she had gone upstairs, I took a candle and went to the library. I knew she had left her little writing-desk there. I found a key that fitted it. I was an excellent amateur carpenter, and the mechanism of secret drawers was no mystery to me. In a few moments I had in my hand the little pocket-book which I had seen her holding on that unlucky day at Rome when I had surprised her. The packet of letters was gone. Could she have destroyed them? I opened the pocket-book. It contained a little diary, with only space for a few words on each day. Some of these entries were significant. So far as I could gather, she and Fraser had met a great deal at some musical meetings which took place once a fortnight at Mrs. Seeley's.

He had evidently attended the church where Lucy went, for on every Sunday for many weeks was the little line: "Went to church; saw G. F., he walked home with us."

Between many of the pages were placed leaves of lemon-plant, and whenever I found one of these dried and withered leaves I found the entry: "Saw G. F.; sang with him."

On one page (the 22nd of June) was written:

"A day I will never forget. What have I done to deserve such happiness! He loves

me! He loves me! I cannot believe it, even now. He told me so as we walked home to-night. I am too happy. I feel afraid."

For the next ten days there was a blank. Then came the words:

"Papa very angry; says he will never consent, that Geoffrey is too poor. Geoffrey says he will never give me up. If he were to now it would kill me."

After that:

"Papa is very cruel; he has forbidden me to write to him, but I will."

After this entry the leaves had been torn out for four months, and the next words I came upon were dated October 29th:

"Papa died."

After that nothing more was written. I closed the worn little book. I had gained absolutely nothing by my unpardonable act of meanness. The success which was to justify the deed was denied me. I knew no more of her relations with Fraser than I had known before.

LADY DEANE.

BY MRS. LEITH ADAMS.

CHAPTER V.

SUMMER had passed by with her crown of flowers; autumn with her diadem of corn and her fruit-laden hands; winter had bound the earth in chains, and now the snow no longer lingered even in the most sheltered nooks. Once more spring-time had come round, and little companies of snowdrops nodded their white heads above the dank mould, ringing their bells merrily in the breeze, whose softness was doubly welcome after the keen blasts of winter. Buds on the boughs were bursting into bunches of tiny curled-up leaflets; birds hopped restlessly from branch to branch, telling each other in ceaseless twitterings that the gay beautiful life of the summer was just beginning. I always fancy that the birds forget there are any more winters to come; it seems to me that memory and anticipation, with their strange dual gift of harrowing torment and passionate delight, are surely the prerogative of man alone.

To some, thank God, the gifts of memory are thoughts of such sweet peace, that the life, however outwardly lonely and unvaried, is peopled by their dear companionship, and the heart that entertains such precious guests is never weary.

Look at the face of the woman who is

bending over a handful of the very first violets of the year! Their faint sweet perfume, their modest loveliness, the kindly thought of the friend who has sent them to her—all these things make her happy, and bring a smile trembling about the mouth whose lines tell of sorrow sanctified, of pain borne as a heaven-sent cross.

She is neither young nor fair: perhaps never has been the last; yet to look upon her is to love her. Nay, more; to those who mourn, to those whose tired feet stumble by the way, to those who are tried and tempted almost beyond what they are able to bear, that chastened look of peace, that tender sympathetic voice, the clasp of the hand, bring hope and trust and comfort.

The woods and hills about Deane Glen are fair to see—the contrast of pine and beech, of cedar and willow, make a picture to enchant an artist-eye; but now the thread of our story has led us to some other scene—a scene quite as beautiful, but wilder and more rugged, for rocks with ruddy fronds of dead bracken drooping from their grey sides, and trees growing all askant, wind-driven, on their summits are a startling contrast to undulating hills carpeted with green, and meadow-lands stretching out far and wide.

We are near the sea, too. What else could sing that low monotonous song of which the ear never wearies, and which makes itself heard as a sweet never-ending monotone, though the birds lilt never so loudly, and the three bells of that little church halfway up the hill on the left try their best to make all the noise they can? Perhaps a well-modulated peal would be better; but there is something cheery in the pleasant jangle of the three bell-voices, and so thinks a woman with a bunch of the first violets lying in her lap, as she sits by the open window of her little room—open for the first time that year.

She is the village pastor's sister, Miss Teresa Wedderburn, or "Miss Tessa," as everyone in Faycliffe-on-Sea calls her, from the boy who brings the milk and doesn't seem to be very much bigger than the can he carries, to old Jim Grappleby the sexton, who rings the three bells of the little church by the simple device of having a rope in each hand and the third tied to his right elbow. The scientific jerk with which he manages to bring in number three exactly at the proper moment is a thing to be remembered when once seen; and the old man firmly believes that on

those rare occasions when Miss Tessa is well enough to be present at the services of the church, nothing more tends to divert her mind and cheer up her heart than the sight of his skill in managing so deftly what he is pleased to call "the critters."

John Wedderburn, perpetual curate of Faycliffe-on-Sea and some miles of country round about the same, had his own ideas as to how things appertaining to the church he served should be done; but he had not been long the shepherd of that flock whose somewhat out-of-the-way pastures lay in a bend of the lovely western coast of England, and whose ideas were primitive in the extreme. One of their pet ideas was old Jim Grappleby; therefore the "new parson" was very tender over him, and allowed him to ring the church bells with two pulls and a jerk as he had done ever since his boyhood; a period of his existence which was now, as the old song has it, "a long time ago."

"If Jim was to be made give o'er ringing them there bells, he'd lay him down and dee," said a strapping farmer's wife to Mr. Wedderburn when he once hinted at a possible change in the management of "the critters." "It's the loife of him, sir—just that, and nothing less—and when folks comes from a long way off to hear you preach, sir—and they do say as we hav'n't had such a man to preach in these parts this many a long year—why, old Jim thinks as they've heered on him and his bells, and have come fer to see him fettle 'em."

The parsonage of Faycliffe, an unpretending cottagelike sort of house with quaint gables, broad eaves, and a verandah running all round it, was so near the church that on a still day like this you could hear the rise and fall of the hymn-tunes when service was going on; and not so far from the sea, hidden by rising ground and jutting rocks, but that you could catch the murmur of its grand unending psalm chiming in.

Perhaps as far as the hymns went they sounded better mellowed and softened by the intervening space taken up by the parsonage-garden and God's acre. A choir of village lads and lasses is apt to be a little less tuneful now and then than a cultivated ear might desire.

Anyway, on this fair spring morning that was almost unseasonably warm and balmy,

New every morning is the love,
Our waking and up-rising prove,

sounded quite in harmony with all things around. The voice of the "great waters," not loud to-day, murmured as softly as a baby in its sleep; the lilting birds were getting up quite an opposition choir in their cathedral, the pine wood behind the parsonage—all these sounds chimed in the one with the other, forming a hymn of praise, rising from the earth to heaven.

Scarcely had the hymn ceased, leaving the sea and the birds to sing on alone, when Miss Tessa saw a well-known and ever-welcome figure coming slowly along the narrow path that led upwards from the shore.

It was Christabel.

Yet hardly the Christabel whom we saw a year ago standing by the brook that babbled through the wood at Deane Glen, and bore upon its breast the little flower-stars white and gold; hardly the Christabel who looked with the wondering, wistful eyes of a child upon life and all the possibilities it held; nor yet the mischief-loving girl who drew the dancing frogs upon her French theme.

This was an older Christabel; a child no longer, rather one whom some magic touch had changed into a woman: a woman with all the latent capabilities within her roused into fullest and intensest life.

"Not at church?" said Miss Tessa with a smile that seemed to question why, as the girl came into the room.

"No; I had a headache; and, besides, I wanted to see you alone."

She had taken off the hat with the plain brown feather that matched her hair, and now, sitting on a low stool, beside her friend's knee, bent her face over the purple violets.

"How sweet they are," she said, "and how glad I am you like them so much!"

"Who said I liked them so much? I suppose you mean because you sent them to me, Miss Vanity?" answered the other, putting a finger under the little round white chin, and so making Christabel look up.

"What tired eyes, child! Is there anything the matter?"

"No; just tired, that's all," said Christabel, laying her head wearily against Miss Tessa's arm.

"They are singing the doxology now," said Miss Wedderburn, after a silence that had lasted some while.

The sound of mirth when we are sorrowful, the sound of praise when we are sad, and more ready to fling ourselves at God's feet and cry for help than to

sing psalms of thanksgiving—things like these soon unseal the fountain of our tears.

Something hot dropped on Miss Tessa's hand.

"Why, Christie—my dearest child!" and her arm was round the girl's shoulders, while her loving glance met the drowned violets of her eyes.

"I told you I was tired. I could not sleep last night."

A little sob half stifled came between the two sentences; and then Christie smiled.

But such a smile!

It might have been the smile of an eternal farewell. Perhaps in some sort it was.

Miss Tessa was puzzled, distressed, but she would not question. She was one of those women who never probe a wound until they are asked. Three months of almost daily companionship may teach two women who are drawn together by the irresistible power of perfect sympathy, a good deal of each other; more indeed than years of so-called friendship where that sympathy is wanting.

When Christie Clare first met and knew Tessa Wedderburn her nature had been like a folded blossom, and, like the egg in the thrush's nest, full of undeveloped possibilities. Now the bud was as "a rose in June," the little egg was a bird with wings to fly heavenward, and a voice to make the world about it full of melody.

There had been other influences at work besides this love for a pure and perfect woman: influences that in their mingled pain and sweetness had made at once the music and the discord of the girl's life, during those short three months that seemed, as she looked back upon them now, the only time during which she had ever known what it really was to live.

Furtively watching the sweet face that lay back against her shoulder, Miss Tessa waited in silence for the confidence that she knew must come. Yet even she, with all her power of intuition, was at a loss to tell by what mental process Christabel passed from the thoughts that had called forth those shining tears, to the line of thought that resulted in a question about herself.

"Do you ever feel lonely—I don't mean a little lonely—but dreadfully, achingly lonely, when you are in this little room for days and weeks together, and can't get out into the sunshine, to watch the sea—or—there?" and she pointed to the church, from whose sacred walls the sound of

praise was once more chiming in with the chorister voices from the woods beyond.

"I used to do, many years ago, when first I learnt that my life was doomed to be so helpless, dear. It was a hard thing to submit in patience—more, perhaps, on John's account than on my own. I had fancied, being so many years older than he, that I might be so much help to him in his work, that I might enter into all those schemes of which he is so full, that I might be the most active worker in his parish, and it all ended in—this—"

"This," stood for a life that was one long suffering, one helpless waiting.

"But you are a help to—your brother; he has often told me so—the best help he has," said Christabel, raising her head from its resting-place and bending over the violets which still lay on her friend's lap.

"I am all the help I can be; but you who have seen and known—who can realise what my brother's life is—what are his aims, his hopes—you can fancy what I would have been to him if I could. With all his strong opinions, John is no narrow-minded sectarian, nor yet one to be content with moving in a set and narrow groove—the 'law of eternal progress,' as he calls it, must, he feels, be the law of man, even as it is of God. He is not content that these people scattered far and wide, these souls who are his charge, should lead pure and helpful lives only because he bids them; they must learn to know why these things are right, to be a 'law unto themselves'—their sordid, toilsome lives must be brightened by every means in his power—they must be educated to think for themselves. Oh Christie! when I see him ever active, full of thoughts and schemes for their improvement; when he tells me of his cottage lectures, of his night classes for the young men, of his singing classes, of all the good which he does for the Master's sake, I sometimes feel a thrill of the old rebellion against the Master's will! Only last night John said to me that what he aimed at was not to regulate the lives of his people for them, but to teach them to regulate their own lives, not only in heavenly things, but in those that some might call the coarser and meaner things of life, and that yet are not so, looked at in the light my brother throws upon them. Well, as I listened, as I watched his earnest face and saw the steadfast light in his eyes—he has our mother's eyes, Christie—I could not repress one word of bitter regret that I could do

so little; but it is only sometimes that I feel like that!"

"Yes; I understand," said Christabel, gently touching the leaves of the poor violets that were beginning to droop a little; "but I mean something different. I mean just—lonely—just as if there was a silence somewhere that—hurts."

"Once, very long ago, when I had to give up hopes that were—dear—I used to feel like that. But, child, see Christ's message to the lonely ones of the world."

She took a small Bible, worn and old, from the little table that always stood by the side of her chair, opened it, and laid it by the violets.

A faded fern-frond marked the place, a faint pencil line marked the verse, and there was a date, that of a year long past, beside it.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

The girl bent her head, and read the sacred record of those solitary hours that have for ever hallowed all the loneliness of earth, be it of heart, or place, or lack of sympathy, or loss of those whose presence could make for us the "wilderness blossom as the rose."

She did not speak as she raised her head, and Miss Tessa closed the book: her lips trembled too much for that.

Poor Christabel! She had been walking "in crooked ways," and she knew it. Till now she had not set it in black and white before her own mind that this was so, and yet, underlying all the sweetness of the past few months, there had been a consciousness of wrong—a shrinking fear from acknowledging to herself that she was taking something for which she had nothing to give in return; nothing, that is, that was her own to barter away, nothing that could satisfy the craving tenderness of eyes that, meeting hers, seemed to say, "I love you, I would set you by my side; no toy, no passing fancy; no, nor yet only my love; but higher still, my companion and my friend, the sharer of my thoughts and aspirations, my fellow-worker for the good of those around us."

Now, with her face turned away from Miss Tessa's gentle gaze, she listened to the mingled voices out in the sun-bathed landscape that would be graven on her heart for ever, as the one word Calais won the heart of the unhappy English queen.

"How shall I go?" she thought; "how shall I leave it all? How shall I tell her? What shall I do?"

Which of us have not felt the same at some time or other in our lives? Living in some quiet spot—where the very air about us is sympathy, "where life seems an easy thing, where Heaven grows nearer day by day, and earth may be happier but less dear"—to be at rest in such a haven, and then to have to steer our frail barque out into the storm-tossed sea, to go amongst those who cannot understand us any more than we can understand them, where life must be a ceaseless self-watchfulness, an endless effort.

Surely, if Christabel had done wrong, was she not about to suffer for it?

"Tell me more," she said at length; for after Miss Tessa's last words there had been a long silence, the girl's hand nestling in the close clasp of her friend's.

"It does me good to listen; it will be something to think of."

This sentence was finished by a kiss dropped upon the hand that held her own.

"There is not much to tell: time has a blessed power of healing, and I have learnt the uses of helplessness now, I think. One thought that has often come to cheer me, is this, Christabel."

She touched the bowed head very lovingly as she spoke—the little head no longer adorned with the long Gretchen plaits of old, but with sunny coils of bright brown hair knotted low down upon the slender neck; a fashion that showed its classic outline to perfection.

"For many years this strange illness of mine has seemed to stand still. I have had bad attacks of pain—as yesterday for instance—but in between these bad spells I have been much the same as before. Now there is some change: I am weaker, less able to recover myself; and I have thought that perhaps the time is drawing near when I shall have the message that comes to all of us at last, 'The Master calleth for thee.' When I have thought these thoughts, like the sun shining upon a cloud and turning it to silver, another thought has come too, and it is this—what if God should be bringing some closer, dearer joy into John's life, something better than I could ever be to him; a sympathy that could enter into the very heart of his life, that would be his through sunshine and shadow, rejoicing with him in success, cheering him in failure?"

Here Miss Tessa stopped short. Christabel had moved away, covered her face with her hands, and was sobbing violently.

"Child—my darling, what is it?" Nay,

do not go away from me. I cannot get up and follow you, you know! Christabel, come back to my knee; put your dear hands in mine, tell me your trouble. Are you angry with me for anything I have said?"

But Christabel did not come back to her friend's side. She took her hands from before her face and let them droop against her brown dress; she stood by the window, looking, not at her friend, but away over towards where the sound of the sea came softly up from the shore; there were no tears in her eyes—those eyes so haggard, so weary that involuntarily Miss Tessa put up her hand across her own to shut out the sight of them—and her voice, when she spoke, was slow and laboured, like that of someone who is very tired, and yet for whom rest is not.

"I came here this morning," she said, "to tell you that I am going away. I only knew it last night. I wanted to send a message by Janet when she came to you three hours ago, but I could not; so I sent the violets instead. You know Mrs. Clements was my mother's friend, and sent for me to come and stay with her down here, because Lady Graham told her she did not think me looking well. Mrs. Clements has been very kind to me, and, I am quite well now."

"All this is very sudden, Christie," said Miss Tessa, wistfully, but yet with a quiet gravity that sent a shiver through the girl's slight form; "are you going back to Lady Graham?"

"Yes, for awhile." The words seemed to come with difficulty, as if breath failed the speaker.

"And then?"

"I—I—am—going to be married. I have been engaged to Sir Edgar Deane—an old playmate of mine—since this time last year. He has been abroad with a friend who is very ill; now he is coming home."

Lower and lower drooped the pretty head; lower and lower sank the broken voice, until the last few words were hardly audible, and Miss Tessa, pressing one trembling hand on either arm of the couch on which she lay, had to lean forward to catch their meaning.

With a long-drawn breath of resolve, Christabel once more lifted her eyes, dim as the faded violets that now lay unheeded on the ground, and met those of her friend.

Maybe she thought the hopeless misery in their blue depths might plead for her.

Miss Tessa had sunk back in her chair. Her hands were clasped tightly together; her lips moved; but Christabel heard no sound of words.

"I came to say good-bye. I tried to tell you so, just now—but I—could not," she said, making an effort over herself, such as in all her young life she had never been called upon to make before. "There is something more I want to say, and it is this: I want you to tell Mr. Wedderburn" (in her mingled agony of shame and love she had nearly called him by a dearer name) "that if ever in the years to come I strive to be a helpful woman to those about me—if ever there is any good in me—if ever I am any good to others—if I try to make the best of life—not in the sense of trying how much happiness I can get from it, but in the sense of living it up to the highest standard of which—just as I find it—it is capable—I shall owe it all—to him—to him, and to you. Tell him that if, in the years to come, sorrowful days are mine, and I know where to look for help, I shall owe that blessed reality of knowledge to him, and to you. Tell him that when I think of heaven, I shall think of it as somewhere where, once again I shall meet—when all the bitterness of life is past—him—and you."

By this time Christabel was on her knees beside Miss Tessa's couch; her arms flung round her in wild abandonment of sorrow; her eyes streaming with tears; her voice broken by sobs.

The chain of resolve had broken under the strain put upon it.

More restrained, yet not less deep, was the emotion of the elder woman. Anger was dying in the sweet breath of pity, and, even with the vivid thought of a man's ruined hopes—a man's heart-hunger for ever unsatisfied, Miss Tessa could not find a word of reproach for the culprit at her knee.

Christabel could have borne it better if she had—could have borne anything better than the look of resigned sorrow on the gentle face that had never yet greeted her comings and her goings but with a smile; and that now, she felt she knew, would never smile upon her any more in the old loving fashion.

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